



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (ENGLISH)

Saber Junction 16 Maneuver Rights Area Frequently Asked Questions

Q) What are Maneuver Rights Areas (MRAs)?

A) Maneuver Rights Areas (MRA) are areas of land in Germany the German Federal Ministry of Defense authorizes NATO forces to use as temporary military maneuver areas. The MRAs are used when U.S. forces need additional training space or special terrain – such as airborne drops zones or river crossing sites -- that are not available on U.S.-controlled local or major training areas in Germany. Nearly 5,000 participants from 18 NATO and European partner nations will take part in the exercise.

Q) Who decides which lands will be used as MRAs?

A) The Supplementary Agreement to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, Article 45, gives U.S. forces the right to conduct maneuvers and exercises on non-U.S.-controlled land in Germany. However, the German Federal Ministry of Defense is the final approval authority on the establishment and use of all MRAs in Germany.

Q) What is the process for gaining approval to use an MRA for military training?

A) Once MRAs are identified and approved, both the U.S. Army and German Federal Ministry of Defense work together to notify affected landowners and communities of the intended use of those lands for training. U.S. Army Maneuver Area Officers are responsible for ensuring training units follow the rules for the use of MRAs (outlined in Army in Europe Regulation 350-22), including for example the use of smoke and pyrotechnics training aids, training times, environmental restrictions and property damage avoidance.

Q) Can landowners/communities deny usage of designated MRAs?

A) Lands are only off-limits to military maneuvers if they are in protected areas (nature preserves and parks, watersheds and historical/cultural sites), near noise-sensitive areas (hospitals and health spas) or near urban areas. The U.S. Army works closely with local landowners and community leaders to limit the inconveniences caused by training off-post.

Q) Why does the Army need to use MRAs if it has Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels?

A) Most U.S. training in Germany is easily contained on U.S.-controlled local and major military training areas, such as Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels. However some training missions require specific terrain (such as river crossings) or more geographically-dispersed areas that better replicate conducting operations over a wide area. MRAs provide NATO units with greater flexibility for conducting training exercises by opening maneuver space beyond U.S.-controlled military training areas. MRAs are most often used to supplement – not replace -- training on Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels.

Q) Why did you decide to use MRAs for this 173rd airborne DATE rotation in April?

A) The MRA drop zones will allow the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade to conduct a large airborne jump and tactical movement in to the Hohenfels Training Area during the exercise. The maneuver can only be accomplished on maneuver rights areas outside the eastern portion of the training area, as the terrain inside Hohenfels and to the west are too wooded and rocky, too small for two airborne battalions to simultaneously jump in to the exercise, and too far from the objective for this type of training mission.

Q) How many soldiers will conduct training on the MRA during this year's 173rd Airborne DATE rotation?

A) Approximately 1,200 paratroopers will jump in to the MRA drop zones during the exercise. The MRA drop zones will only be used for one day of the exercise.

Q) Will other nations beside the U.S. Army use the MRAs?

A) Yes. While the majority of paratroopers will be U.S. Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, paratroopers from Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom will also participate.

Q) Will you use live ammunition in the MRAs?

A) No. Live ammunition is not authorized in MRAs in accordance with U.S. Army regulations.

Q) Will the Army conduct heavy drops on the MRA?

A) Although heavy (cargo) drops are authorized on select MRAs, there will be no heavy drops on MRAs during the 173rd DATE rotation this spring.

Q) What happens if the Army injures German civilians during training in the MRA?
How will you protect the local population?

A) The U.S. Army takes every precaution to ensure the safety of civilians near military training. The Army works closely with local German authorities to make sure local citizens are aware of the training maneuvers and encouraged to remain vigilant around military vehicles and equipment. All units are trained by Maneuver Area Officers on the proper protocol and procedures for operating in the MRAs prior to conducting any training off-post.

Q) Will there be increased training noise or traffic during around the MRAs?

A) During most major exercises, there is an increase in military traffic around Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels. There may be increased training noise in and around the MRA drop zones and the training areas during the exercise due to low-flying aircraft.

Q) Will roads be shut down around the MRAs during the exercise?

A) Roads near the MRA drop zones may be temporarily closed on the day of the off-post maneuvers to keep both Soldiers and local community members safe.

Q) If the Army damages property or infrastructure (utilities line, water, telecommunications), how will those damages be compensated?

A) The U.S. Army will document all maneuver damage that occurs in the MRAs during training. Damage claims will be assessed by claims adjustors from the German Federal government and the final decision on compensation will be made by them. The process is defined and regulated by Army in Europe Regulation 350-22.

Q) What will the Army do to prevent environmental damage in the MRAs?

A) The Army has very strict rules concerning environmental compliance in Maneuver Rights Areas. All units must conduct environmental and maneuver-damage prevention training prior to using MRAs. All units are required to ensure that any spills are properly contained and removed from the MRA upon completion of the training. Any accidents or spills will be promptly reported and clean-up will be coordinated with local German environmental authorities.

Q) Does the Army plan to use MRAs in the future? If so, when, where and how?

A) Maneuver Rights Areas are an important component of military training in Europe. Future exercises will continue to take advantage of the efficiency and effectiveness of off-post training to supplement local and major training areas. The U.S. Army knows that training off-post can present some inconveniences for local communities. Many Soldiers and their families are part of those communities, too. We have a vested interest in working closely with our German partners and neighbors to ensure that any and all off-post military maneuvers are as unobtrusive and safe as possible.